
Fast Facts About Clean Elections Public Financing for Election Campaigns

Why Public Financing?

Anyone can run. Eliminates the need for personal wealth or wealthy backers to run for office. In Maine and Arizona, more women, more people of color, ordinary folks, have been elected.

Eliminates the (perception of) quid pro quo, political favors for campaign cash.

Levels the financial playing field, so that campaigns/elections are about issues and voters, rather than who raises the most money.

Eliminates “dialing for dollars” and constant campaign giving for true believers—replaced by more attention to voters and discussion of issues by candidates. Imagine candidate rallies, on issues and platform, without the necessity of a fundraising pitch!

Imagine democracy! Allows public officials and lawmakers to legislate and govern in the best interest of voters and the community, without concern for re-election campaign cash.

Public policy results we deserve! On her first day in office as the nation’s only governor elected through public financing, Arizona’s Governor Janet Napolitano signed an order, extending lower-priced prescription drugs to every Arizona resident. Reportedly she said, the pharmaceutical industry had no hold over her.

Similarly, with 84 percent of Maine state legislators now elected through Maine’s Clean Election Act program, the legislature has enacted a program for lower-priced drugs, set the state on the road to universal health care, and reversed some unnecessary tax-giveaways.

Affordable !Less than \$4 per year. A study shows that campaign spending for ALL statewide races, upper-level judicial races, and all legislative races in the state, combined, has averaged approximately \$22 million per year, in recent election cycles. Public financing for all races could be had for less than \$4 per year, per resident – a pittance, given a state budget of nearly \$30 billion.

Public supports Clean Elections

Recent national polling undertaken for Public Campaign Action Fund and Common Cause shows that Americans overwhelmingly (74%) support public financing. The result is bipartisan with 80% of Democrats, 78% of Independents, and 65% of Republicans support this reform.

Unions and organizations have better use for funds

No longer needing general treasury funds (or member’s pocketbooks) for campaign contributions, unions and civic organizations can use their funds for issue education, membership organizing, and get-out-the-vote efforts - once voters and issues matter more than money in election results.

continued

States and Cities with Clean Elections programs:

Arizona: 1998, approved by ballot initiative; began in 2000, all statewide and legislative offices.

Maine: 1996, Maine Clean Elections Act approved by initiative, began in 2000, for gubernatorial and legislative offices. In 2006, 84% of elected legislators ran using only public financing.

New Jersey: 2004, pilot project for two districts adopted by legislature. In 2007, CE option available in three legislative districts, used by a total of 20 candidates (Oct-Nov 2007).

New Mexico: 2003, public financing available to candidates for Public Regulation Commission. In 2007, the legislature expanded the program to include upper-level judicial elections.

North Carolina: Judicial elections. In 2006, 8 of 12 candidates, including 5 of 6 winners, used the reform program. In 2007, the NC legislature expanded the Voter-Owned Elections program, to include State Auditor, Commissioner of Insurance, and Superintendent of Public Instruction

Vermont: 1997, public financing was adopted by the state legislature for gubernatorial and lieutenant governor candidates. The program has not been extensively used, due in large part to legal attacks on other provisions of the law.

Connecticut: 2005, the Citizens Election Program was adopted legislatively, to start for legislative races in 2008, and statewide positions in 2010.

Massachusetts: 1998, voters approved The Clean Elections Law, to provide PF for statewide candidates. Repealed by legislature in 2003, to avoid funding the program by court order.

Albuquerque, NM: 2005, public funding for council (by district), and mayor (citywide).

Portland, OR: 2005, full public funding for council and mayor (citywide).

Elsewhere in the U.S., many local governments offer matching fund programs for local office.

How to fund Clean Elections programs

Funding for public financing programs varies as widely as the states and cities enacting.

Maine's Clean Elections Act requires a \$2 million per year set-aside from the state's general fund, augmented by qualifying contributions, increased lobbying fees, unspent public funds, and reductions in legislative and executive branch administrative budget.

Arizona funds their program through a 10% surcharge on civil and criminal fines, a dollar-for-dollar tax credit (not an increased tax), qualifying contributions, a \$5 tax check-off, and civil penalties from enforcement actions.

New Jersey allocated money from the general fund, for their pilot program in three districts.

North Carolina uses a \$3 tax check-off, voluntary contributions, attorneys law-license fees, and legislative appropriations.

New Mexico generates funding from fees pertaining to activities regulated by the Public Regulation Commission. The option of legislative appropriation is made available.

Portland, Oregon, provides funding for city council races, from the city's general budget, through a small proportional reduction in each department's budget.

In **Washington,** we are studying options that would generate needed funds in a fair manner.

Craig Salins, WPC Executive Director

Washington Public Campaigns • washclean.org • 206-784-2522